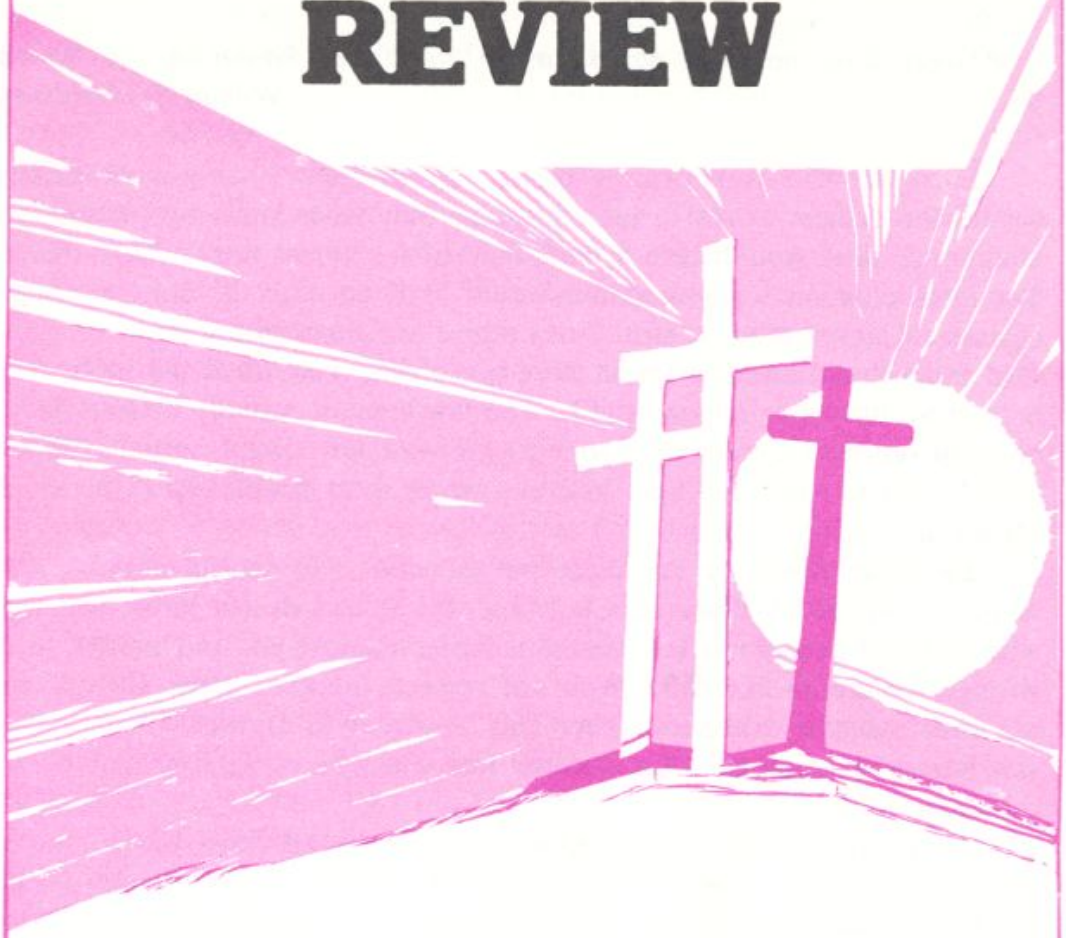
RESTORATION REVIEW



Mankind is notoriously too dense to read the signs that God sends from time to time. We require drums to be beaten into our ears, before we should wake from our trance and hear the warning and see that to lose oneself in all is the only way to find oneself. —*Mohandas Ghandi*

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Volume 26, No. 4 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **April 1984**

The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View …

THE LAW OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF MAN

Good laws make it easier to do right and harder to do wrong. —William E. Gladstone

Even he who is lawless is blessed by the laws that govern society, for his lawlessness works to his advantage only when most people are law-abiding. A thief would have a hard time of it if most people were thieves. The ideal situation for a shoplifter would be if he were the only one in the business. Thieves want to steal from others but they do not want others to steal from them, and the fewer there are plying their trade the more there is to steal and with minimum risk. The law-breaker actually believes in the law, *for others.* He wants everyone to keep the law except himself. No one would want to run a red light in a city where most people did it. He might get killed!

Laws are not only expedient but essential. No society could endure without laws, and William E. Gladstone, the famed British jurist, was right when he said that good laws make it easier to do right and harder to do wrong. We are all like children in one respect: life goes better for us when we know what is expected of us. This is why Will Durant, the historian, saw laws as liberating: “Man became free when he recognized that he was subject to law.”

Since law is part of the fabric of life we all have some kind of philosophy of law, which finds expression in such things as our attitude toward a policeman, traffic regulations, and paying taxes. This essay sets forth a *Christian* view of law, one that recognizes the God of heaven as the great lawgiver and as the author of all just laws. God created law when he created man and society, and he has never left the nations of the world without law. God could not make man free without making him responsible to law. In being responsible to God as his creator man is always responsible to law. Lawlessness is more than the breaking of laws; it is rebellion against God. There is a *Christian* philosophy of law in that the Christian faith, more than any other religion, esteems the “powers that be” as an institution of God and the agents thereof as ministers of God. The apostle Paul in Rom. 13 sets forth the loftiest view of civil government to be found anywhere in the entire history of religions.

Beginning with the admonition "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God," he goes on to draw an amazing conclusion: "Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." Recognizing that it was the *pax Romana* (Roman peace) that saved the world from chaos and actually protected those who bore the gospel to the nations of the world, the apostle goes on to say: "Rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority?" Paul here recognizes two axioms of jurisprudence: *no law* is *self-enforcing; there must, be rulers to enforce it;* and *no law* is *effective apart from punishment for violating it.*

This is why he goes on to say that if the Christian will "do what is good," that is, obey the law, he will receive the ruler's approval, for "he is God's servant for your good." Since lawlessness has its retribution and rightly so, the apostle warns the believers: "But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer." Note that it is *God's* wrath that the ruler executes as God's minister. So God is maintaining order in the state he has ordained through those who rule over it.

The apostle would have us realize that God has not only ordained civil government but that those who rule in the affairs of men are ministers of God. The king, the president, the judge, the policeman *ministers of God!* Those who rail at the president, lie to the judge, and watch for the patrolman as they speed along the highway hardly share Paul's view of such agents: *they are ministers of God for your good.* But they are also the agents of God's wrath. If you break the law you pay a fine or go to jail. You might even pay with your life. *He does not bear the sword in vain!*

We need to teach our children (assuming that we have learned it ourselves!) that in obeying the law they are obeying God and in breaking the law they are disobeying God.

This theme runs throughout the Christian scriptures, for early on Jesus taught his disciples that they were to "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Lk. 20:25). Strictly speaking, everything belongs to God, but here Jesus honors the domain of the state. If we benefit from Caesar's rule, including the use of his money, we should honor his right to impose taxes, Jesus is saying. But Caesar's domain is limited, for we render to God what is especially his, particularly our hearts and wills.

Peter joins Paul in seeing the ruler as "sent by God to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right," and he enjoins the believer to "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Pet. 2:13-14). The apostle goes on to say that God should be feared and the emperor honored. The believer is even urged to pray for the rulers so that "we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (1 Tim. 2:1-2), which means that Christians should be the most exemplary citizens of all. Justin Martyr, a few decades after the apostolic age, saw his fellow Christians living such lives: "Everywhere, we, more readily than all men, endeavor to pay to those appointed by you the taxes, both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by Jesus. We worship only God, but in other things we will gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men, and praying that, with your kingly power, you may be found to possess also sound judgment." It is evident that the early Christians had a positive attitude toward civil government, even when those governments were less than what they should have been.

In our day, when states and laws alike are being challenged the world over, we need a renewed understanding of the nature of law. In a sense the idea of law seems uncomplicated, for there are basically only two kinds. One might be defined as a "uniformly acting force which determines the regular sequence of events, which would include what we call "the laws of nature," such as gravity, as well as those forces within us that seem determinative, such as Paul had in mind when he wrote: "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (Rom. 7:23). He uses *law* three times in this passage, all of which refer to forces or drives within. While this meaning of law is relevant to us all, it is not our concern in this essay.

In working out a meaningful view of law it is the other kind of law that concerns us: "a rule of conduct enjoined by a competent authority and enforced, if need be, by penalties." These laws fall into two categories, those imposed by civil government and those that have their source in the revelation of God. Laws imposed by either God or man might begin as customs determined by experience rather than by fiat or arbitrary rule. Stealing did not become wrong when God ruled "Thou shalt not steal," but he gave the rule because it was wrong, proved to be so by long years of human experience. Cain murdered his brother Abel long before the Ten Commandments were engraved on stone (but not before they were placed within the conscience of man!), but he was well aware that he had done wrong. He had violated both the law of God and of man, for man had "learned" both by experience and by moral reason that he was not to kill. So, when it came time to give

statutes to his covenant people, God imposed injunctions against theft and murder in the Ten Commandments. But theft and murder were already wrong, made so by God's "eternal" moral law planted in the heart and mind of man.

That is why Paul urged obedience to civil authorities on the ground of "for the sake of conscience" as well as to avoid the wrath of God (Rom. 13:5). Unless our consciences have become seared and warped by self-will, we "know" a lot about right and wrong without being told. It is part of our nature as creatures of God. There is moral reason, which could be called *law,* given us by God, that tells us we are not to steal or commit murder. Positive law (posited by God or man) makes natural or moral law more pointed and unambiguous. Written law, whether by God or man, spells out in detail what we already sense, perhaps vaguely.

It is this that makes a law a good and just law, that it reflect the natural and moral law of God. And this can be our only reason for disobeying civil government, when it clearly and persistently (we should give a bad law time to correct itself through legal means) violates the law of God. While the Greeks saw law as a creation of the state, they recognized a higher law to which the state must give account. In Sophocles' *Antigone* the heroine of the play insists on burying the body of her dead brother even though the king had ruled against it. Antigone appealed to the "unwritten statues of heaven, not of today or yesterday, but from all time" as her justification for disobeying the king.

That is a good example of the moral law within us: *a person's right to be buried,* whether at sea or in the earth. One doesn't have to find it on the statute books or in the Bible. Like Antigone, we find it in the unwritten statutes of heaven. It is part of the moral law of *respect for persons,* even in death. Add to that an even greater moral law, *reverence for God,* and we have the essence of all law. This is why we have the basis of all law in the Ten Commandments, for all ten of them speak either to reverence for God or respect for persons.

This is why it is wrong to speak of the Ten Commandments as being abolished or being "nailed to the Cross," as we mistakenly ascribe to Scripture. They transcend time and circumstance and are for all people in all ages, as Paul recognizes in Rom. 13:8-10, where he applies them to Jews and Gentiles alike to whom he was writing. After repeating several of the Ten Commandments and adding "and any other commandment," he says they are all summed up in one sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." We

make Paul speak nonsense if we have him referring to laws that were abolished. He is rather informing us that all of God's law is a matter of *love:* reverence for God and respect for persons, and these are both eternal and universal.

This of course includes the prophets and virtually all of the Old Testament, except the portions that clearly apply to Israel only, for they are expansions of the Ten Commandments, the eternal laws of God. Zech. 7:12 catches this truth in telling us that the prophets by the Spirit spoke "the law" to the people. When Micah 6:8 says, "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?," he is not only summarizing "the law" as given in the Ten Commandments but is giving the essence of all law, whether human or divine. To discard such basic truths as this because they are in the Old Testament is to miss the point of God's revelation.

The Bible in fact makes "the law" the *sine qua non* (the essential condition) in the life of all men, "the lawless and disobedient, the ungodly and sinners," and goes on to name the unholy, the profane, murderers, the immoral, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, noting that the law is for them, to mark them as sinners before God. And this, says Paul, is "in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted" (1 Tim. 1:8-11).

While Paul was bold enough to claim that he was "blameless" before such a law (Philip. 3:6), he recognized that "the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law" (Rom. 3:21). But in that context he saw the law bearing witness to that grace and that through law comes the knowledge of sin. He himself would not have realized the devastating nature of sin except by the law, he says in Rom. 7:7. It was when "the commandment came" that he was smitten before God and thus turned to man's only hope, the grace of God as revealed in Christ, which means of course that he was not so "blameless" after all. The law blamed him and brought him to God. God intends that the law have such a mission in the life of all sinners: drive them in their desperation to the grace of God. —*the Editor*

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"THE WAY" IS THE WAY TO UNITY

It is a simple little word whether in Greek or in English, and its meaning is uncomplicated, even when used metaphorically. *Way* or *the way* makes its way into the Bible hundreds of times, and it is used the way we use it. Just as I used it twice in that sentence, both literally and metaphorically! The Bible uses it in such instances as the wise men escaping Herod by returning to their own country "by another way" and Paul urging upon the Corinthians "a more excellent way," which again illustrates both its literal and metaphorical use.

It often means *a trodden way* or *a road,* as in Lk. 8:5: "some seed fell beside the road," which is its literal meaning; but it is often used as in Rom. 3:17: "the way of peace they have not known." Sometimes the picture is literal but the meaning symbolic, as in Mt. 7:]4: "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it." So it means "a course of conduct or a way of thinking" when used as a metaphor, as in 1 Cor. 4:1 7: "Timothy will remind you of my ways which are in Christ."

We would call it an everyday word. We know what one means when he says "This way, please," but we also know what "Don't act that way" means, or even "Is that the way it is?" It is a neat little word with a rich variety of uses.

It is significant that the early Christians used this little word *hodos.* (way) in referring to themselves, except they always used the definite article *he* (the) with it, *the way,* and it is properly rendered "the Way" in most translations.

In chronicling Paul's mission in Ephesus, Luke explains why the apostle turned to a school: "When some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9). He goes on to say in verse 23: "About that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way." And in Acts 22:4 Luke reports Paul saying: "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons." But Paul uses this term only as reported by Luke, not in his letters.

The Way! It comes as near being a name for the new community of believers as we have in the New Testament, and yet it hardly fits as a name for the church. I don't know that it has ever been selected as a denominational name by any modern church. It does not lend itself to that sort of treatment. *The Way* is too simple, too disarming, too humble to support sectarian pride. One might come up with "The Church of The Way," but simply "The Way" seems to lack the proper ingredient. Nor can "the Church" comfortably be

substituted for the term Luke uses in these several references. While Paul does speak of persecuting *the church* (Gal. 1:13), when Luke has him saying "I persecuted the Way" there is a different ring.

There is nothing hierarchical, organizational, or institutional about the Way. You could hardly speak of bishops of the Way or elders of the Way, and perhaps not even "the minister of the Way." And "the Work, Worship and Organization of the Way" just won't wash. It is too personal, too intimate, too poetic for such a use. You might say "The church withdrew from her," but who would say "the Way withdrew from her"? In fact, the Way denotes a reality that is un-church like.

And this may be the force of Paul's use of the term in Acts 24: 14, where he says: "This I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers." If *church* were used here would it not have to be substituted for "sect" rather than "the Way"? While you could hardly have Paul say "according to the church which they call a sect," you could have him say "according to the Way which they call a church." Or something akin to that. If Paul lived in our day it is unlikely that he would equate what we call "the church" with what he called "the Way." Just as *sect* (or *heresy)* did not have the connotation in his time that it has to us. Paul was not suggesting that *heresy* was particularly derogatory. He was rather saying something like "I serve God according to the new Way, which is but another school of thought to the Jews."

But the Way to Paul was something distinctly different from another Jewish theological persuasion, like Pharisaism. It was something profoundly personal. Like Frost's "the road less travelled," the Way to Paul was the way of truth, the way of being made right with God, the way of Christ, the way of the Cross. It was the way that the world could not understand. It was not another Jewish philosophy.

When Luke tells of the governor's understanding of these things, he again employs the term: "Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way. . ." (Acts 24:22). One wonders if the Way was such a common term that it came to be used by an outsider like Felix. The governor made it his business to understand the diversities of Judaism, and while he must have associated the Christians with the Jews at this point in time, he realized that "the Way" that they walked was "a road taken" that brought persecution from other Jews.

The Way was Jesus Christ, pure and simple, and that is why I say the Way is the way of unity. We are *already* united with all those who take the less-travelled road, the way that sets them apart from the vain pursuits of this world. The bond that unites us is Jesus — love and loyalty to him. The only reason we walk "the Way" is because we walk it with him, and we are one with all those who walk that same way. The way may be narrow but it is not crowded, and we are not compelled to walk in single file, with each one moving at the same pace. Since we are all following Jesus (and not each other) we may now and again pass each other in our common pilgrimage. There are many who are far ahead of me in "the walk" in terms of knowledge and good works, but we are nonetheless in the Way together.

All of us are followers of Jesus because we believe what he said in Jn. 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." He extends the greatest invitation ever tendered the human race: *Come, follow me.* All who accept that invitation are his disciples and are walking in the Way, however faulty and stumbling they may be. Some may even crawl, but they are in the Way and we are *together.* Praise God for that!

There is activity along the Way. We work together, better with some than with others. We worship together, even if at different points along the Way. We study together, with the differences overshadowed by love. We live the life of joy together, realizing that God is the Father of us all in spite of our differences. But we *don't* stake off the Way as our own domain and pontificate who can and who cannot take that road. We are not like the ancient highwaymen who battered and bludgeoned their way and cast by the wayside whom they would. We are not even sentinels (and no watchdogs are needed) on patrol. The Lord takes care of all that. If someone "strange" is following him in the Way who is "not of us," we need not worry about it, for since *He* is the Way they would not be there unless *He* put them there.

The Way is the way of unity! Let's make it a new slogan and act upon it. It means that we can make but one thing a condition to unity and fellowship: *following Jesus Christ.* We can and must walk with all those who walk with Him, whether or not they have "our" perfect knowledge and perfect obedience.

If a pagan like Governor Felix understood that it was those who followed the humble Nazarene, often at the risk of their lives, that were the Way, we should be able to understand it. It is the Way — not the System — that is the way of unity. —*the Editor*

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FAME OR INFAMY IN THE COLLINSVILLE TRIAL?

If and when I revise my history of the Stone-Campbell Movement I might have to recognize that the most famous (or infamous?) name among Churches of Christ in the 1980's is Marian Guinn. She was catapulted into fame by way of a judicial spectacle that resulted from a suit she filed against the elders of the Collinsville Church of Christ in Collinsville, Oklahoma, near Tulsa. As the plaintiff she charged that the elders invaded her privacy when they publicly exposed her as an adulteress before the congregation, withdrawing fellowship, and then sending such information to other churches. The elders as the defendants insisted that they were doing their duty as elders of the church, administering discipline according to the Scriptures.

The trial made headlines across the nation, in both *Time* and *Newsweek* as well as the great metropolitan dailies, and was given extensive coverage on radio and TV. A Texas business man told me he was repeatedly exposed to the story on TV while staying in a New York hotel. It has attracted the attention of jurists and clergy alike both for its drama and its uniqueness. One lawyer indicated that the trial might well have plowed new ground in reference to "the right of privacy," which thus far has limited judicial history.

But Marian Guinn is not only now famous but rich or potentially rich, for she not only won the suit to the tune of $390,000, but Hollywood has offered her $200,000 to $300,000 for the right to use her story. This caused a Tulsa newspaper to quip that she had received "Manna from Hollywood," if not from heaven!

The subjects of this affair may be seen as ordinary folk like the rest of us, caught up in a drama they had no way of anticipating. The elders are probably well-meaning men who were only doing their God-given duty as they saw it. They had shown Marian various kindnesses, when she was on welfare, such as helping her buy a car and find a job, and even when her sin of adultery marred the relationship they continued to be solicitous toward her. It was only when she refused to repent that they threatened public exposure and withdrawal. All of us, and especially those of us who have served as elders, can only sympathize with these men in their ordeal, even if we believe they erred.

As for Marian Guinn, a nurse, she is probably a reasonable and decent person, as most Church of Christ folk are, caught up in a Greeklike tragedy that she did not ask for and would have avoided if she could have. She was reported as saying that she did everything

but get down on her knees in an effort to dissuade the elders from their threat of public exposure. A divorcee with four children, she must have had a hard time of it, and, being lonely, it is understandable that she would succumb to the attentions of the former mayor of Collinsville, whose car was seen in front of her house all too frequently. Bur no one has accused her of promiscuity.

The mayor's name was broadcast far and wide as being involved with her. After all the publicity my wife Ouida figures that he must be hiding under the nearest pile of wood, and both of us feel that he should receive his fair share of the "reward" money. It is hardly the way to treat a mayor.

The lawyers of course played their role. The elders may have made a mistake in selecting a lawyer who was a member of the Church of Christ, for Marian's attorney is one of those courtroom generals who nearly always wins. He added to the drama with such statements as: "He's single and she's single and this is America," which was impressively realistic. Most of us consider illicit sex between singles as less serious than when marital vows are violated. And it is the latter, not the former, that is really adultery. The commandment *Thou shalt not commit adultery* is given to those who would betray the marital covenant. Marian's lawyer also taunted the elders for their claim that their treatment of her was done in love. "They loved her so much that they loved her plumb out of town!," he said, referring to Marian's flight to Tulsa amidst the storm. The lawyer knew that most folk who sit on juries, including church members, have a built-in sympathy for the underdog, especially when the pursuer is an institution. Half of the jury belonged to no church at all.

The elders' lawyer dutifully appealed to Oklahoma's Supreme Court to dismiss the case, arguing that the church should be left to settle its own affairs. But the high court rejected the appeal without comment, so the case had to be settled in court. Faced with the trial the lawyer told the press: "We are going to find out what elders can and can't do." The jury decided that the elders could not legally do what they did. But amidst all the smoke of battle there is confusion in the minds of many Church of Christ people, if not the public at large, as to what it is that elders cannot do.

In the light of the trial it is rather simple: *elders cannot administer discipline to one who is not under their oversight*. Some preachers in the Tulsa area confuse the issue, charging that the court is trying to deny us religious freedom or to tell the church how to run its affairs. This is a smokescreen.

A week before the climactic public withdrawal, Marian Guinn, at the advice of her counsel, presented to the elders in person a handwritten resignation from the congregation, and she warned the elders that if they persisted in their course she would take legal action. This the elders ignored and proceeded to expose her publicly, calling her name and telling the people not to associate with her.

Two things were never questioned in the trial: (1) Marian Guinn's guilt as charged; (2) the church's right to discipline or withdraw from its own members. The issue was whether the elders had the right to discipline her after she resigned her membership, thus invading her privacy. The jury decided that since she was no longer under their jurisdiction, the elders *did* invade her privacy.

Here is an oddity in the history of Church of Christ polity: the elders contended that the woman did not have the right to resign from the congregation during a disciplinary procedure. They would not in effect accept her resignation. She could not withdraw from the church, they had to withdraw from her. It is something like an employer telling an employee, "You can't quit, I fire you!"

This strange doctrine led the editor of the *Tulsa Tribune* to defend on his editorial page "The Right to Resign." A Church of Christ minister for 47 years responded to the editorial and while pleading for sympathy for the elders in their plight on the part of the press concluded by saying: "Another issue raised in your editorial was regarding the right of a member to resign his church membership, and this is a valid one. It challenges the notion that one is perpetually a member of a congregation and cannot withdraw his membership. I have been a Church of Christ minister for 47 years, and I had never before heard this contention made. It is not a view generally shared by Churches of Christ or its ministers."

Indeed! It is axiomatic that if one has the right to join a voluntary society he has the right to resign from that same society and at anytime. That society in turn has the right to draw up its own code of ethics and to dismiss from its membership those who violate it. And we in Churches of Christ believe that there are circumstances in which our members can be excluded from the local congregation (but not necessarily from the Body of Christ at large). But to say that one cannot withdraw her membership, whatever be the circumstances, is going to far. Far too far, for it impinges on that person's freedom.

I am persuaded that even if the jury had been made up entirely of Church of Christ members, the verdict could have been no different. You are not going to get our people to make the judgment that a member of one of our congregations cannot withdraw his

membership at any time and for any reason. Perhaps Marian no longer felt comfortable in the Collinsville Church of Christ, or she didn't like the new paint job, or she feared the building might collapse on her some Sunday. The reason doesn't matter — any reason or no reason. She had the right, the God-given right, to withdraw her membership whenever she wished.

And in resigning amidst the ugly conflict she gave the elders an out if they wanted out. If they had issued such a statement as this to the congregation, the matter would have ended then and there: "There is a sister among us who has fallen into the sin of adultery. We have made painstaking effort to turn her from the course she has taken, but without success. She has in the meantime submitted to us her letter of resignation from this congregation. So you will understand that she is no longer a member of this church and thus no longer under our shepherding care." One gets the impression that for whatever reason they did not want out.

This is a great embarrassment to the Church of Christ and we should all regret it deeply. It does not help that some of our preachers in the Tulsa area, however well-meaning they may be, confuse the issue, as they did before thousands of our folk at the Tulsa Workshop, inciting negative feelings toward "the powers that be." I was present to hear one preacher criticize the court for infringing upon our freedom of religion, and he presumed to speak for all "fundamentalist churches" when he wondered what would come next in the state's efforts to involve itself in the affairs of the church, indicating that the separation of church and state was threatened. And of course the sin of Marian Guinn was well emphasized.

But this was all beside the point. The trial never raised the issue of Marian Guinn's guilt. This was conceded and understood. Neither was there any question raised of the church's right to discipline its members. There was no threat whatever to religious freedom. There was but one issue: did the elders have the right to do what they did to a *former* member of their church. The judge emphasized this fact, instructing the jury *not* to regard her as a member at the time the disciplinary action took place.

We may have hurt ourselves badly if the public is led to believe that if you join a Church of Christ you join for life and can't resign if the elders say you can't. Those brethren who fear that the world will be shocked to' see us "harboring adulterers" need to ask what the world must think of our understanding of freedom. *We* may be the ones that are a threat to religious freedom if the Collinsville doctrine is our doctrine.

One prominent Tulsa minister, a fine man and a great preacher, has taken up the Collinsville cause with abandon. On a cassette tape that he circulates far and wide (the cost of $5 goes into a legal fund for the elders) he tells you how you can make a million dollars. Join a good Church of Christ, he says, and commit some such sin as homosexuality or adultery. Then refuse the pleas of the caring eldership, and then when they take disciplinary action against you, sue them for a million dollars. You are sure to win!

Whether intentional or not he left out one crucial step. To have a chance for that million you'd have to find an eldership that would publicly expose you after you withdrew your membership from their church. In spite of the minister's insistence, it is risky to try to get rich that way. There is surely only one eldership among us with such an idea, and it is not likely that they will continue to practice it. They can't afford it!

As for our dear sister Marian Guinn, there is a frightful irony to all this. She was no doubt sincere in her desire for privacy, and we can respect the jury's verdict that her privacy was invaded. But what is she now but a very *public* figure, one who is apparently willing to portray her carnal past and her fracas with a small, unsuspecting church on the silver screen for money. She could of course say that the elders started it, but what was at first an exposure to a church of 120 people now holds promise of going burlesque before multiplied millions and at her choosing. By the time her children are grown she might decide that the cost was too high.

So with the elders who have appealed the verdict to a higher court. One would suppose that everyone has had enough. —*the Editor*

We are going to have to decide what kind of people we are - whether we obey the law only when we approve of it, or whether we obey it no matter how distasteful we may find it. -*Harry Scott Ashmore*

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IS "THE FORCE" OF STAR WARS THE GOD OF HISTORY?

I winced at the news report that President Reagan had given his blessing to our astronauts in outer space with "May the Force be with you!" Knowing something of the character of the President's faith, I put the best interpretation on those words, taking him to mean *May God be with you!* While I suppose one might refer to the God of heaven as "the Force," something like the Scriptures refer to him as God Almighty, we all know that the term is the invention of George Lucas, creator of Star Wars, and I doubt if the Force of Star Wars is as much as a shadow of the God of history and the Creator of the universe. It may in fact be a dangerous subterfuge, an insidious denial of the immanent and transcendent Supreme Being.

By immanent I mean that God is a *living* God who is active in history and who involves himself in the human drama, a God who hears and answers prayers. By transcendent I mean a God who is more than nature or "mind" or "feeling," one who stands above and beyond all things, both animate and inanimate, as Creator and Lord of all the universe. If we believe in the immanence of God, we believe he is with us and in us and that he rules in the affairs of men, always accomplishing his purposes, and we believe we are his children and that he loves us. If we believe in the transcendence of God, then we believe that even though he dwells in our hearts the universe cannot contain him. We worship him in reverence and awe because we believe that he transcends all things in time and space.

It is not likely that this is the Force of Star Wars. But my misgivings may have been based upon a warning given by C. S. Lewis in his *The Screwtape Letters.* Screw tape is the master devil who advises the inexperienced Wormwood on how to deceive man. Wormwood wants to know if he should keep his patient ignorant of his existence. Lewis has Screwtape tell his disciple that the "present policy of the High Command" is that they are to conceal themselves from man, even if that does take away the diabolic pleasure of direct terrorism. Then Screwtape says, "On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics." This is Lewis' way of noting that man cannot consistently believe in evil spirits and yet be a materialist or a sceptic. So it is wise for Satan to so blind us that we believe in no spirits at all, for that keeps God far from our hearts and minds.

Then Screwtape says to Wormwood: "At least, not yet. I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mytholigise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, a belief in us (though not under that name) will creep in while the human

mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy." The Enemy to the devils is of course God. Then Lewis has Screwtape nail it down as if he had read George Lucas' script, even though Lewis died long before the first saga of Star Wars: "The 'Life Force,' the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis may here prove useful. If once we can produce our perfect work — the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping, what he vaguely calls 'Forces' while denying the existence of 'spirits' — then the end of the war will be in sight."

Yes, if Satan can emotionalise and mythologise our science to the point that "Forces" or "the Force" are "worshipped" by those who reject anything supernatural, then he has won the war. In honoring "the Force" men can actually be worshipping Satan while rejecting the God who created them and loves them. Lewis says that when this happens Satan has created his Materialist Magician. "The Force" becomes a kind of cosmic wonderworker in a universe that has no God.

Satan always employs vagueness in his counterfeiting efforts, which is evident in Star Wars. There is no Spirit to pray to and no God who hears the cries of suffering humanity. There is no God who discloses his will to man, no God who gives himself in extravagant love. Luke Skywalker learns to "tune in," as it were, to some cosmic force, which may be no more than mystic concentration or getting one's thinking on track. The Eastern religions with their cultic practice of transcendental meditation have been doing this for centuries, and their current impact upon American culture may influence the "religion" of Star Wars far more than the Christian faith.

C. S. Lewis was not ignorant of Satanic wisdom. All Satan need do is to create a Materialist Magician for man to worship, for then man really worships Satan himself. This is cleverly accomplished in Star Wars. The Jedi, the good guys with the white hats, are on the side of the Magician. The Evil Empire is evil because it does not believe in the magician. There is really no God in the drama, no Supreme Being, no miracles, nothing that transcends man himself. The Jedis reach only within themselves and discover the "god" that is man, man at his best, or Man the ultimate, which some humanists speak of. There is surely no Bible in Star Wars and no "visited" planets. If the Christian faith believes that "In the beginning was the Word," the religion of Star Wars would have to be something like "In the beginning was the Computer."

Ah, how insidious it all is! Our youth will sit watching the saga of the Jedi with lumps in their throats, mesmerized by the good guys with all their electronic gear who have the cosmic Magician on their side. Satan does not mind their *believing* so long as their hearts

and minds are not directed toward the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. In substituting "the Force" (it gives one something to believe in!) the likes of Screw tape and Wormwood have already won, hands down. The deceptive device "the Force be with you'!'" in the context of Star Wars means nothing at all, except something like "Draw upon all the forces within you!" The "religion" is a kind of scientism or scientology that implies that man can save himself by probing ever more deeply into himself and his universe, or, as in Star Wars, universes.

Our youth who are taught the Scriptures may be entertained by Star Wars, which I heartily applaud, but they will not be tempted to substitute the vague forces of nature for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God of Scripture is the great "I Am" who spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry," he said to Moses. "I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them."

I have seen
I have heard.
I know.
I have come down.

This is the Good News that is basic in the story of the Bible. As with the Hebrews in Egypt, God always sees when we hurt. He hears our cries. He knows all about it. And, praise God, he comes down to us! His love is so extravagant that he gave us his own Son.

It all led the apostle Paul to exclaim, *If God be for us, who can be against us.*

In the backdrop of such truths the exhortation "The Force be with you" pales into insignificance. —*the Editor*

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ADDING GUILT TO ANXIETY

Cecil Hook

We all have heard those lessons about worrying. Selected passages are emphasized: "I tell you, do not be anxious..." (Matt. 6:25-34); "Have no anxiety about anything" (Phi. 4:6). The conclusion: It is sinful to worry because we are commanded to have no anxiety about anything. Such a simplistic explanation does not always help the listener.

Let's suppose that you are diagnosed as having a malignancy, and 1 advise, "Just don't worry about it!" Your business is failing, and I urge, "Don't be concerned." Y our daughter is missing, and I admonish you, "It is a sin to be anxious!" A world is dying in sin, and I explain, "You should carry no burden of care, for anxiety is sinful!" Those answers are as inappropriate as telling a person not to become hungry when he has no food, not to hurt because of a smashed thumb, or not to grieve for the companion taken by death. Such advice may seem pious and high-sounding, but it is impractical and guilt-inducing. It would demand the stifling of basic feelings and emotions which social beings share, and it would add a weight of guilt to the burden of concern.

To seek to relieve anxiety by asserting that one is commanded not to worry is no more effective than trying to produce faith by declaring that one is commanded to believe. To be effective, we must teach what will relieve anxiety and what will produce faith.

Jesus had extreme anxieties. His temptation was real, and it brought overwhelming concern. In the garden he "began to be greatly distressed and troubled … My soul is very sorrowful, even to death …" (Mark l4:33f). In the depth of distress he prayed, "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me … there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground" (Luke 22:41 f). And think of this: "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear" (Heb. 5:7). Does that sound like one who had no worries?

These passages reveal such intense anxiety in Jesus as he approached the cross that he feared that the trauma would kill him physically before his atoning sacrifice could be completed. But the Father heard his loud, fearful cries and sent an angel to sustain him, thus saving him from that abortive death.

Life with no anxieties does not exist. "Look at the birds," Jesus urges in teaching us about anxiety. I watch the birds eating crumbs on the patio. They make a few quick pecks and then look around to see if they are in danger. Their constant anxiety causes them to interrupt their eating every few seconds. And have you not seen the anxieties of a mother bird as she watches her fledglings leave the nest and begin testing their wings? Evidently, Jesus' teachings about anxiety have some limitation in their application. When Jesus

taught “Do not be anxious about your life,” he must have been setting an ideal to be sought rather than commanding the absolute achievement of that state of mind in all circumstances.

Paul had anxieties. After Epaphroditus had recovered from near death, Paul sent him to Philippi “that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious” (Phil. 2:28). Anxiety over Titus moved this devout preacher to walk away from an open opportunity to preach at Troas: “When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went into Macedonia” (2 Cor. 2:12). Also he wrote of “the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28).

When Paul urged the Philippians to “have no anxiety about anything,” he must have considered that to be a sublime state of mind which he himself had not reached rather than an absolute achievement of mental discipline necessary for salvation.

Some anxieties are helpful. They stir us to appropriate activity to relieve the need or solve the problem. They move us to treat our cancer, search for the missing child, work to evangelize the lost, and to pray and depend upon God.

A courageous man once stated, “I enjoy myself most when I am scared.” He was spurred to do greater things then. Fear, rightly directed, is the father of courage. It stimulates the adrenalin and brings out the best in us.

Some anxieties hinder. Anxieties must be acted upon or they can become paralyzing. One of the words used by Jesus means more literally “to draw in different directions, to distract.” When we permit worries to build so as to distract us from trust in God or from acting to solve the source of the anxiety, then Jesus would rebuke us also with “Don’t be anxious, you of little faith.” But to bear guilt for weakness of faith would only add greater burden by further straining the faith that allowed the worry in the first place.

Some anxieties help us to attack our problems to solve them; others tend to enlarge and multiply the problems. Some worries lead to joy; others rob of all joy. Jesus would have us to be free of anxieties, not because total mental discipline which overrides emotions is necessary for salvation, but so that we may enjoy a fuller, happier life as a disciple. Mary V. Littrell expressed it nicely in this little poem:

A traveler crossed a frozen stream

In trembling fear one day;
Later a teamster drove across,
And whistled all the way.

Great faith and little faith alike
Were granted safe convoy;
But one had pangs of needless fear,
The other all the joy!

—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas 78130

Law is the embodiment of the moral sentiment of the people. —*Sir William Blackstone*

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BOOK NOTES

Our people generally have neglected devotional readings, and we can use help for those "quiet moments." Ouida and I enjoy using *A Daily Key for Today's Christians* by Bill Bowles, minister of Central Christian Church in Arkansas City, Ks., a man highly qualified to "lead a devotional." He gives us 365 key texts, one for each day of the year, along with a summary of its key ideas and an "action step" for that day. A 375page book, it is easily worth our price of 7.50 postpaid. If you buy it for a gift, you might want the hardback at 14.95 postpaid. Highly recommended!

I am often asked for a sound, readable book on elders. You can do no better than Waymon D. Miller's *The Role of Elders in the New Testament Church.* Every relevant passage and virtually every question raised is dealt with in a reasonable and responsible manner by a man who has those same traits. 4.00 postpaid.

The Church of Christ by Thomas W. Phillips is one of the classics of our heritage and a must for those who are building a restoration library. 5.50 postpaid.

Anything F. F. Bruce writes is worth reading, especially his newest book, *The Gospel of John.* Being both a believer and a scholar who knows how to communicate, he is always exciting. What else, with *John* as his source material! 13.95 postpaid.

We can be thankful that two significant books on our history are still in print: *The Campbell-Rice Debate* at 19.95 and *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* at 21.95. And now we have an important reprint from College Press: *The Christian Baptist,* Alexander Campbell's first journal, dating back to 1823. It is beautifully bound in one volume, with the print larger than originally. 24.95 postpaid.

You can't get this journal for 1981-82, entitled *Jesus Today,* in a single volume (400 pages) for only 8.50 postpaid in hardback.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

During a recent visit to the west coast I was privileged to visit with Bob Cannon, longtime minister in Churches of Christ but now pastor of Bethel Church (Assembly of God) in Eureka, Ca. Bob and his wife Shirley, who one time ministered to the largest Church of Christ in the Los Angeles area (Inglewood), have a fruitful service in a growing church. The Assemblies of God might surprise you with their strong biblical stance. After explaining that their Communion is open, one of their booklets goes on to say: "We also practice water baptism by immersion as a believer's public declaration of his identification with Jesus Christ and of his new relationship with God through faith (Mt. 28:19; Ro. 6:4)." If that wouldn't satisfy Alexander Campbell, it would Barton W. Stone! The Assemblies hold that the baptism of the Holy Spirit should be normative for all Christians and that speaking in tongues is the "first physical evidence" of this.

Dan Rogers, Box 277, Bellevue, Tx. 76228, has published his first issue of the *Unity of the Spirit,* the purpose of which is to help restore our lost unity. This first issue has an article on "The Criteria for Determining Brotherhood," which concludes that we do not determine brotherhood since it is determined by God. You may receive the paper for the asking.

Ray Downen, Box 1065, Joplin, Mo. 64802, publishes *Reborn Free,* which is an attempt to show that Christians are not under the Mosaic law or any other law-system and it emphasizes our freedom in Christ. I t is highly resourceful and is available to you at two copies for 3.00.

The McDade Church of Christ, Box 471, McDade, Tx. 78560, is more than 100 years old, but has always been small, current attendance being 32. Some committed believers are trying to save the work and they solicit your help, especially in their effort to enlist the help of a full-time worker. Write to the above address if you are interested.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Contrary to what he had you publish, I did not delete anything from the printed exchange with Bill Jackson that was supposed to have been included. He and I agreed that our discussion could be published in *part* or in whole. His rejoinder was excluded only because of lack of space. —*Buff Scott, Cherokee, IO*.

I subscribe to several papers edited by members of the Church of Christ. It is heartening to read through these papers and find that we as a people are becoming less judgmental. We are finally realizing that God's grace may well extend further than we have been willing to admit. While God will no doubt, draw the line, *He has not given us the chalk.* He has not placed the burden on our shoulders to determine how much error He will forgive. —*Dace Delaney, Mt. Vernon, MO*.

It is not fair to refer to homosexuality as simply an "alternative lifestyle." I do not live the lifestyle of most homosexuals or heterosexuals. Any sexual behavior based simply upon lust is sin. It has been a prejudice of the Biblical writers and Christians generally that while heterosexuals can live a lifestyle based upon love and commitment, homosexuals cannot. Homosexuals are constantly accused of degrading acts like beastiality. Gay people who want to be Christians have the almost impossible task of overcoming centuries of ignorance and prejudice in informing others of their sexuality. —*Name withheld by request.*

I wonder how the groups fare who for one reason or another break away from the mainline Church of Christ. I have the feeling they often fade or move into other churches. Have you any data or comment on this? —*Ike Summerlin, Austin, TX*.

(The ones who do not make a complete break and remain Churches of Christ do better, and those who do not break away at all but move out on edge of change do still better. Some do fizzle and fade. There is both an identity and a leadership problem. Such groups need each other's counsel and there is presently talk of calling a convention of changing Churches of Christ, leaving it to each church to decide if it fits that description. —*Ed*.)

In this column (Feb. issue) the paragraph that summarized a letter from J. D. Flanagin concluded with “This makes it clear that what seems ‘natural’ to us is to be rejected.” This does not correctly represent his letter. His point was that homosexual acts are not acceptable simply because the seem “natural” to us. We regret this error.

The Stone-Campbell Movement by Leroy Garrett - In Its Second Printing

I have a copy and our church library has a copy of your excellent history of the Stone-Campbell movement. I am commending it to everyone I know related to the Restoration Movement. Besides being scholarly, and filling in some crucial unknown factors in developing events, the spirit of the writing is paramount. Love for the kingdom of God, love for Christ, and love for persons pervades the book. I hope it goes into a third and fourth printing.” *—William E. Bowles, minister, Central Christian Church, Arkansas City, Ks.*

How to get a copy: Order directly from us at *1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Tx. 76201 (21.95 postpaid). Or you may get up a club of 8 subscribers (including yourself, new or renewal) at 3.00 each (24.00) and receive a bonus copy.

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